DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY F Schmaltz DATE 7/2/85
XDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE _____
AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
FOIA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

(67)

R

THE MIDDLE EAST AIRCRAFT PACKAGE

~~TALKING~~ POINTS

-- The proposed aircraft sales are consistent with our policy that arms transfers will be used to promote our national security and that of our close friends. The proposed transfers will fall within the President's overall ceilings on arms transfers. We believe the transfer of aircraft to the three countries will help them meet their legitimate security needs.

-- Since the founding of the state of Israel, there has never been any question in the Executive or Legislative Branch that Israel must have the ability to defend itself. Our commitment to Israel's security is unshakable. That concept is a fundamental element of the present proposal on aircraft sales to several Middle Eastern countries.

-- In our judgement, Israel has now, and will retain following the proposed sales to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, a substantial margin of air superiority in the region. A number of Israeli aircraft must be replaced in the years ahead and the F-15s and F-16s are intended to help meet that requirement.

-- The sales to Israel are consistent with our policy of assuring that Israel's ability to defend itself is unquestioned. Over the past five years, we have provided more than $10 billion in military and economic aid to Israel and today it is stronger militarily than at any time since creation of the state 30 years ago.

-- Egypt is handicapped by a military arsenal largely composed of Soviet-supplied equipment that has steadily deteriorated over the past two years. The Soviets have supplied almost no new equipment or spare parts since March 1976 and inventories of Egyptian defense equipment are now below 1973 levels. This is particularly true of aircraft. The F-5s would give Egypt the fighter aircraft it needs to maintain a minimum defensive capability. The F-5 is less sophisticated than the F-15 or F-16 and has a shorter range.

-- Saudi Arabia, a vast country with enormous oil resources, a small population and a small military force, is inadequately equipped to defend itself or deter potential external threats. The Saudis' air defense fighters, aging British-origin Lightnings, must be phased out of the inventory over the next three to four years. The F-15 is primarily an air defense fighter. Saudi Arabia's F-5 aircraft do not have the all-weather capability, extensive radar coverage or other air superiority characteristics necessary to defend against advanced aircraft in neighboring inventories. The I Hawk system is too thinly spread to give adequate protection to the Kingdom. The F-15s, therefore, would fill a void in the nation's air defense.

-- Saudi Arabia does not possess what is considered a major military force. Even with the F-15, it will have the smallest armed force of any major state in the Middle East with which to defend the largest oil reserves in the world. The United States looks upon Saudi Arabia to continue to play a moderating role in the Middle East peace-seeking process.

-- A fundamental consideration in proposing these sales was that the acquisition of the aircraft by the three countries would not upset the basic regional balance in the Middle East.

-- Another essential element in our review of these sales was the impact on the preace process. We believe that the sale of aircraft which meets legitimate defense needs will strengthen the confidence of the nations concerned and thereby enhance their support for meaningful peace negtiations. The demonstration that these nations can rely on the United States will reinforce our role in working with the parties for a settlement.